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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the result of a survey of undergraduate general education in a national sample of colleges and universities. It was conducted during 2000 through two electronic surveys; one of chief academic officers and a second directed to the administrator most responsible for day-to-day administration of a general education program. Responses were received from 279 chief academic officers and 200 general education administrators. One of the most surprising findings was that general education remains a high priority item on the majority of campuses, with 57% of the responding institutions currently conducting a formal review of the general education program, and 43% planning a review in the next year. Over the last 10 years, general education has increased as an educational priority. General education reforms of the past decade have resulted in a variety of new approaches, including increased interest in thematic programs. In spite of the high level of interest in general education from campus and external sources, there is little evidence that academic leaders have made many advances in developing shared educational values and embedding them in the life of the institution. Students often display a preference for specialized study, and the advance of general education is slowed by the organization and values of the academy itself. An appendix contains a profile of responding institutions. (Contains 14 references.) (SLD)

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The Status of General Education in the Year 2000:

Summary of a National Survey

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THE STATUS OF GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE YEAR 2000:

SUMMARY OF A NATIONAL SURVEY

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Preface

This report, *The Status of General Education in the Year 2000*, summarizes the results of a survey of undergraduate general education in a national sample of colleges and universities. It was conducted during the year 2000 by means of two electronic surveys, one to chief academic officers and a second to the administrator most responsible for day-to-day administration of general education programs. The report of the full findings is expected to be published by The Pennsylvania State University in coming months.

AAC&U acknowledges the outstanding work of our colleagues at the university for their leadership in conducting this study. Dr. James Ratcliff approached the Association about doing a survey of general education, and we eagerly accepted his offer to conduct the research in collaboration with me. Jim and his two graduate research assistants, Kent Johnson and Steven LaNasa, worked with me to design the surveys, analyze the data, and write this report. The team from Penn State also did the difficult tasks of putting the surveys on the web site, preparing an electronic data base of chief academic officers, collecting the responses (even when there were glitches), and analyzing the data.

We hope that this executive summary of the study is helpful in understanding the current condition of general education on the nation's campuses, strengths as well as weaknesses. We also hope it helps our colleagues working and studying in these programs to understand some of the changes over the past decade and to prepare for some of the challenges ahead.

Jerry G. Gaff
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February 2001

General Education in the Year 2000

General education has always been a central part of the American baccalaureate degree. As disciplinary specialization grew throughout the twentieth century, general education has been the program that assures that all students—regardless of specialization or intended career—become acquainted with history and culture and with science and mathematics. It is also a major vehicle for cultivating capacities such as communication, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and integration of knowledge. Even as professional and pre-professional programs produce a larger share of undergraduate majors and disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences a smaller proportion, general education is regarded as a central feature of preparation for professions as diverse as business, education, engineering, and nursing. Because of its centrality, it is not surprising that general education typically is the largest academic program offered by colleges and universities.

Many of the criticisms and calls for reform of higher education tend, at least implicitly, to be targeted at general education. For example, *Involvement in Learning* (National Institute of Education 1984) called for greater attention to the first two years of college and the use of teaching approaches that actively involve students in their education. *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (Association of American Colleges 1985) spelled out a minimum required curriculum as a way to raise quality and increase coherence. Musil (1996) and Humphreys (1997) urged more attention to diversity in the general education of all students.

Because of its centrality, general education has been studied extensively. Indeed, a series of similar national surveys during recent decades has tracked major trends in general education (Dressel & DeLisle 1969; Blackburn and others 1976). Also, Toombs and others (1989) studied general education in a representative national sample of college and university catalogs. Gaff (1991) surveyed institutions that had recently made changes in their general education programs to identify curricular trends. All those investigations are now a decade or more old. Despite

the ongoing ferment in general education, there has been no recent national survey of current trends. We decided that a new study about the aims, organization, processes, and assessment of general education could provide useful information. The purposes of this new study are to provide a) a snapshot of general education practice at the turn of the century, b) information about changes in the past decade, and c) insight about the challenges of the future.

The Survey

GE 2000 and CAO 2000 are two related questionnaires we constructed for this survey. The CAO 2000 form was an initial survey of chief academic officers at 567 four-year institutions that are members of AAC&U. This sample approximated the proportion of institutions in the country in each of the Carnegie categories. Not only did the CAOs share their views regarding general education at their institutions, they also identified the individual directly responsible for administering general education at their institution. That person was then contacted and asked to complete the GE 2000 survey. Predictably, many CAOs, particularly in smaller institutions, identified themselves as the primary general education administrators (GEA) and completed the GE 2000 survey themselves.

The CAO 2000 survey asked chief academic officers for their perceptions on goals, practices, priorities, external influences, and future challenges. The GE 2000 survey gathered information on the aims, organization and structure, pedagogy and assessment practices. Together, the two data sources provide an extensive portrait of general education at the turn of the century.

The surveys were conducted largely via email during Spring 2000. After adjusting for undeliverable emails, the total population for the CAO 2000 survey was 521 institutions. To the CAO survey, we received responses from 279 institutions (response rate = 54 percent). We also received 200 responses to the GE 2000 survey (response rate = 69 percent of CAO responses). Appendix A provides a summary of the institutions that participated in the survey.

Continuing Interest in General Education

One of the most surprising findings is that general education remains a high priority item on the majority of campuses: 57 percent of the institutions are reported by CAOs to be currently conducting a formal review of the general education program. This is the case in all kinds of institutions: 68 percent at research universities, 64 percent at doctoral institutions, 55 percent at masters institutions, and 53 percent at baccalaureate colleges. Although the flurry of national reports, critical attacks on the academy, and calls for reform that characterized the 1980s seems to have abated, the serious work of strengthening the core of the undergraduate curriculum continues on campuses.

TABLE 1. INSTITUTIONS CURRENTLY REVIEWING GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

	CURRENTLY REVIEWING GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM		NOT CURRENTLY REVIEWING GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM	
TYPE OF INSTITUTION	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TYPE	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TYPE
Research Universities	27	67.5	13	32.5
Doctoral Institutions	16	64.0	9	36.0
Masters Institutions	53	55.2	43	44.8
Baccalaureate Colleges	63	53.4	55	46.6
TOTALS	159	57.0	120	43.0

Additionally, 43 percent were planning a review of their general education program in the next year. Clearly, some are carrying their reviews over more than one year, while others report new initiatives envisioned for 2001. These data indicate that many institutions are revisiting their programs once again to make refinements, add new elements, or try to achieve something, such as coherence, that may previously have eluded them.

In the last ten years general education has *increased* as an institutional priority, according to 64 percent of the CAO respondents, whereas only 2 percent said it has become *less* of a priority, and 33 percent reported *no change*. Further questions were posed about changes in attitudes toward general education among dif-

ferent constituencies. Attitudes of administrators in 73 percent of the institutions were reported to have become *more favorable* (with 23 percent reporting *no change*), and faculty attitudes were said to have become *more favorable* at 53 percent of the institutions (with 40 percent reporting *no change*). If these perceptions are accurate, they represent significantly increased interest and attention among those two key groups.

Attitudes of students toward general education are another matter. Respondents reported that at 62 percent of the institutions, student attitudes were unchanged from ten years ago. Twenty-one percent said student attitudes were *more favorable*, while 17 percent reported that students were *less favorable*. One wonders why students haven't gotten the message. If institutions are placing a higher priority on general education, and if faculty members and administrators have more positive attitudes, why hasn't this new enthusiasm transferred to the students' attitudes? We return to this important question later in this summary.

CAOs were asked to rate their general education programs according to several characteristics. Seventy-three percent reported that the program had clear goals, saying that characterized the program either *very much* or *quite a lot*. Fewer, 62 percent, reported that curricular requirements were directly linked to goals. It appears to be easier for an academic community to agree on what students should learn than it is to make sure that requirements and courses explicitly address those goals.

As curriculum leaders know, it is one thing to establish graduation requirements and quite another for them to have coherence. When asked whether their programs had coherent sequences of courses, the CAOs acknowledged that was the case *very much* or *quite a lot* in 38 percent of the cases. While coherence is often sought in college curricula, faculty often fall short of their own aspirations. Distribution requirements, a common form of general education structure, permit student choice, faculty autonomy, and ease of administration; but, as academics know, it is difficult to make linkages among courses developed and taught independently.

Finally, we asked the extent to which their institutions assess student learning in relation to the goals, and only 32 percent said they did this *very much* or *quite a*

lot. Although there is much talk about assessment, it appears that relatively few institutions actually assess student learning in relation to the goals they establish.

Preferred Practices

The last revision to respondents' general education programs was made during the decade of the 1990s at 78 percent of the institutions; 56 percent made changes since 1994. In the general education programs of the last decade, certain types of curricular patterns have been favored. Freshman seminars are reported in 55 percent of the cases; interdisciplinary courses in 55 percent; and common learning experiences for students in 49 percent. Other curricular forms, while not widely found, are of emerging interest: Advanced courses are reported in 36 percent of the programs; senior papers in 28 percent; and paired or linked courses in 26 percent. Finally, still others, although advocated by some, have yet to gain broad acceptance: Service learning is found in 21 percent of general education programs, internships in 19 percent, and learning contracts in 15 percent. Administrators did report that their institutions use the latter forms of education but that they are not an explicit part of the general education program.

While these curricular practices provide a snapshot of the areas emphasized in general education, they do not fully capture the richness in thought and design represented in the general education reforms of the past decade. Open-ended questions on the survey provide a fuller picture. The comments reveal shifts in general education practice at many institutions away from traditional content-oriented structures to more emphasis on themes and abilities. Thematic programs appear more likely to include learning communities, service learning, reflective essays, and capstone courses. Themes supplement curricular goals and attempt to better communicate to key constituents the distinctive quality of the program and the institution. Themes define for the students and other constituents what a baccalaureate degree from a specific higher education institution "means," distinguishing its degree from others.

How are colleges and universities communicating the goals, processes, and structures of general education to students and other constituents? Foremost, general

education programs are explained to students in writing through catalogues (96 percent) and web pages (96 percent). Further, general education is frequently communicated orally through faculty advisors (88 percent) and professional student advisors (79 percent). Yet, one wonders how effective these means are as communication devices. Most catalogs are better at explaining the mechanics and requirements of the curriculum than at the rationale behind the requirements. And advisors too often urge students to get their general education requirements "out of the way," so that they can get on to the more interesting study of their majors.

Other communication mechanisms were reported in a minority of institutions. Only 29 percent include general education in their viewbooks, the first attractive booklet sent to students and designed to elicit their interest. This suggests that the admissions officers do not regard general education as attractive enough to students to include it in their first major communication with prospective students. Course syllabi (44 percent), faculty in general education courses (44 percent), and general education publications (38 percent) are also used. Although the variety of communication vehicles used to explain general education at single institutions is striking, what is not clear is the extent to which these various mediums are providing clear, consistent, and cogent messages of purpose, organization, and expectations. Ambiguous communication might be a key reason why student attitudes toward general education haven't become more favorable, even though attitudes of faculty members and administrators have.

Assessment of Student Learning

Despite mandates by state legislatures and standards of regional accrediting agencies calling for the evaluation of student learning, assessment of general education has been surprisingly slow to catch on. Only 31 percent of institutions reported that they assess student performance relative to general education goals either *very much* or *quite a lot*. This means that efforts to improve general education curricula do not benefit from a careful analysis of the extent to which the current curriculum is or is not contributing to the learning of students.

Further, only 15 percent of the institutions implementing curriculum changes

report they also are assessing student outcomes the majority thereby depriving themselves of information that might make their organizational changes go more smoothly. Lacking evidence of effectiveness curricular discussions tend to get bogged down in rhetoric and campus politics. These findings are surprising given the emphasis for more than a decade on assessing student outcomes by states accrediting bodies, major higher education associations, and the federal government.

Assessment in general education that has been developed seems to be related to subject or skill area. Assessment appears as a high priority in several areas such as the natural sciences, mathematics, writing and critical thinking, as illustrated in Table 2. However, in many content and cognitive areas such as Religion and the Physical Sciences, Cultural Diversity and Computing, assessment remains a low priority. One explanation is that while plans for general education may be developed centrally through a task force or college-wide committee, accountability for achieving the purposes of the plan is left to individual departments. Another possibility is that criteria, methods, and measures are less developed in certain disciplines and cognitive skill areas than in others.

If one compares the level of assessment reported by single goal areas in Table 2, it is far higher than the reported overall assessment of student learning in general education (33 percent). This finding further suggests that most frequently a piecemeal approach has been taken to assessment. The lack of comprehensive assessment may encourage churning of general education programs, wherein old practices are exchanged for new with little evidence of either one's effect on student learning. Another implication is that a piecemeal approach to general education assessment yields little evidence of holistic student development. Yet, such a holistic view of student development is often at the heart of general education aims.

General Education and Degree Requirements

The overall size of the general education program is often a concern. The GEAs were asked about the number of credit hours devoted to the whole general education program and to specific categories. According to our data, the *average* general education requirement is 37.6 percent of the baccalaureate degree, or 45.1 credi

TABLE 2 CURRICULAR GOALS AND ASSESSMENT OF GENERAL EDUCATION BY CONTENT AND COGNITIVE AREAS

CONTENT AREA	PERCENT REPORTING GOAL IN AREA	PERCENT ASSESSING GOAL
Natural Sciences	87.8	61.1
Math/Quantitative	82.3	60.9
Social Sciences	86.3	56.7
Humanities	77.9	50.8
Fine Arts	71.6	45.9
Literature	61.3	44.3
History	60.7	42.3
Philosophy, Ethics	60.6	39.0
Foreign Languages	46.9	33.6
Life Sciences	43.4	31.1
Physical Sciences	46.3	30.5
Religion	38.7	22.7
COGNITIVE AREA		
Reading/Writing	91.0	77.2
Critical Thinking	72.0	55.6
Speaking/Listening	62.9	49.2
Computing	54.2	41.6
Cultural Diversity	67.4	36.7
Global Studies	55.3	31.7
Physical Education	45.4	30.6
Interdisciplinary	46.0	28.0

it units, assuming 120 credits are required for graduation. The *median* is 40 percent of a 120-hour baccalaureate requirement, or 47.8 credit units. These figures can be compared to other surveys even though they used different methodologies. In 1967, before student protests let to relaxed graduation requirements, general education amounted to an average of 43.1 percent of the baccalaureate curriculum (Dressel and DeLisle). In 1974, after many institutuions relaxed requirements, it

dropped to 33.5 percent (Blackburn and others). In 1988, after a decade of re-inventing general education, required general education increased to 37.9 percent of the total (Toombs and others).

General education continues to comprise a significant portion of baccalaureate degrees; however, comments in both surveys suggest that the role, structure, and importance of general education at individual institutions continues to be an area of increased priority and heated debate.

External Influences

In recent years both state agencies and regional accrediting bodies have focused on institutional and programmatic accountability. Twenty-four percent of all institutions report state legislatures, state governing boards, or system coordinating boards influenced their curriculum. However, among public institutions 56 percent report that general education requirements have been influenced by one of these bodies. This large percentage of public institutions being affected suggests a higher level of state involvement in curricular issues than at most points in the history of American higher education.

State governing agencies appear to focus on the standardization of courses and credits in the liberal arts and sciences, across public higher education institutions. This comes through the prescription of subjects to be taught, courses to be offered, and/or student competencies to be achieved. General education requirements appear to be a primary target. Three reasons for standardization of general education emerge. First, legislators see standardization as a means to minimize credit loss and to facilitate student transfer between institutions. Secondly, standardization allows state politicians or bureaucrats to determine the content of general education programs, circumventing traditional faculty authority over the curriculum. Third, standardization promises financial savings, as more expensive educational alternatives are curbed. This increased involvement of states in general education suggests that academics have perhaps failed to adequately articulate clear purposes for general education and to develop strong programs of study that are directly linked to essential student learning.

Another significant source of external influence is regional accrediting agencies. Thirty-eight percent of all institutions reported general education requirements were influenced by regional accrediting agencies. As Table 3 shows, there were significant differences in the level of this influence according to accrediting region.

TABLE 3. INFLUENCE OF ACCREDITING ASSOCIATION ON GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

REGION	Total Number of Institutions in Region	General Education influenced by accrediting agency	
		Number	%
Middle States	73	16	21.9
New England	28	12	42.9
North Central	84	29	34.5
Northwestern	12	4	33.3
Southern	63	36	57.1
Western	19	9	47.4

Since several of these accrediting associations are currently revising their standards and processes to give greater focus to student learning and assessment, they may become even more influential in curricular decisions in the future.

Changes in accreditation tend to stem from two purposes: to increase institutional accountability for educational programs and to stimulate plans for continuous improvement based on the assessment of student learning. The lower-than-expected proportion of institutions reporting curricular changes that include coherent course sequencing (38 percent) or assessment of student learning relative to goals (32 percent) may indicate these are areas of emergent effort rather than diminished attention. Given the urging of the regional (and some specialized) accrediting associations, we may see in coming years increased emphasis on the quality of general education as expressed in student learning.

Internal Challenges

CAOs were asked what they saw as the most important challenges facing general education at their institutions. Their write-in answers, listed below, reveal a broad array of challenges from various sources.

Students

- Students perceive that general education does not contribute to career success, whereas majors do.
- Students do not want to take required courses outside their predetermined interests.
- Students want us to devise an exciting curriculum that engages the average student in the very first semester of college.
- We need to secure better academic and social success of first-time entering students.
- The cost of a college education makes students ask why they have to take courses unrelated to what they consider their majors.

Faculty

- We need to find creative ways to bring new hires into the process. Most graduate school preparation does not effectively prepare new faculty for our model of general education.
- We soon will need to replace retiring faculty who have been instrumental in the delivery of general education.
- We fear the loss of student enrollments if we do (and if we don't) change general education.
- How can we engage full time faculty in the general education program and reactivate the involvement of senior faculty?

ADMINISTRATORS

- There is a formal and informal divide between the divisions, such as academic affairs and student affairs, that works against effective general education.
- We have traditionally favored our major fields when making choices for resource allocation.
- We find difficulty integrating system-mandated distribution requirements into our general education program.

INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

- We are under pressure to develop specialized general education requirements for professional programs.
- Let's get it done! We've been talking for five years.
- General education has become the "whipping boy" for every imaginable problem.
- Budget constraints inhibit change.
- We need to bolster the liberal arts as the true foundation of professional goals.

These challenges are daunting, suggesting the need for sophisticated leadership among both administrators and faculty. Academic leaders need the vision to see the important role of general education, the ability to enlist others in the effort to strengthen it, strategies to develop proposals and to move them through the process of approval and implementation, ability to communicate clearly to all constituencies, persistence, and, probably, a lot of luck.

Conclusions

Interest Level

The high level of interest in general education continues a trend dating from at least 19[illegible]. At that time the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (19[illegible]) called general education a "disaster area." Harvard College received a report from its Task Force on the Core Curriculum (19[illegible]8) proposing a new required general education program, and the U.S. Commissioner of Education and his assistant (Boyer and Kaplan 19[illegible]) called for a common core curriculum to strengthen social bonds and counteract rampant individualism. Campus activity in general education continued during the 1990s, as [illegible]8 percent of the leaders in this survey reported their current programs date from that decade. The continuing reform in the 1990s may not have been visible, without national reports and statements from blue ribbon committees that were staples of the [illegible]0s and 80s. However, the high level of activity across all types of institutions in the 1990s and in 2000 suggests general education continues to occupy the attention of higher education institutions. It seems that attention to improving general education is, and should be, a regular and routine part of academic life. The impetus to improve general education is further supported by recent trends of increased influence on general education from both state legislatures and accrediting associations.

Constant Effort

For the curriculum to be alive and engaging, it must be dynamic and resonate to the needs and interests of current constituents, while fulfilling its perennial obligations of providing students with essential content, skills, and personal qualities. Boyer and Levine (1981) regarded attention to general education as episodic, with high levels of activity after World Wars I and II as well as the time of writing. But we suggest that an emphasis on general education is constant, with repeated efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning, strengthen the operations of programs, assess results, recruit and support the development of faculty, and do all the things that can lead to better learning by students. Although most institu-

tions only occasionally make major structural change in the general education program, most are more or less constantly working to improve their offerings. Reviewing and revising general education is what quality institutions do all the time.

Challenges

Despite the high level of interest in general education from campus and external sources, there is little evidence that academic leaders have made much advancement in the science or art of developing shared educational values and embedding them in the life of institutions. Leaders report a good deal of slippage in connecting learning goals to curricula and courses. Coherence remains an enticing but elusive goal at most campuses. Assessment of complex learning goals remains an aspiration rather than a reality in most institutions. Administrators report many challenges that range far beyond courses and curricula: recruiting faculty with capacity and commitment to teach general education courses, supporting and developing the faculty to work in a core, developing strategies for faculty to work with their colleagues in other departments, conveying to students the value and practicality of learning outside their major, connecting work in the arts and sciences with professional studies, securing adequate resources, creating new structures to support cross-departmental programs, and the list goes on.

In short, the advance of general education remains stymied by the organization and values of the academy itself. The tradition of faculty autonomy and the lack of a tradition for working collaboratively, the preference of students and faculty for specialized study over the broad aims of general and liberal learning, and the protection of turf by administrators and faculty alike: these are all major barriers to designing, approving, implementing, and assessing an effective general education program. General education proposals usually fail not because of a lack of good people or a solid design, but because these kinds of organizational barriers prove to be insuperable, strategies for change are flawed, and implementation processes are inadequate.

Leadership

Academic leaders, administrators and faculty members alike, would be well advised to develop sophistication in academic leadership and in managing the complex processes of embedding a program of general education in the life of institutions. There are many examples of such leadership and of institutions of all types that have overcome the barriers and implemented exemplary general education programs. Campus leaders should learn from these successful examples so they can lead a collective effort that enjoys widespread support among all constituencies.

Appendix A: Institutional Profile

The data were coded to analyze variance in responses by institutional type, institutional control, and accrediting region. Institutional type was coded using a modified Carnegie classification. Table A1 summarizes the institutions responding to the survey by institutional type.

TABLE A1: NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS COMPLETING THE SURVEY BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE – CAO 2000

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE	NUMBER	PERCENT
Research Universities	40	14.3
Doctoral Institutions	25	9.0
Masters Institutions	96	34.4
Baccalaureate Colleges	118	42.3
TOTAL	279	100.0

Institutional control was coded using three categories as reported in the Higher Education Directory. Table A2 summarizes the responding institutions by type of control.

TABLE A2: SUMMARY OF INSTITUTIONS BY SOURCE OF CONTROL – CAO 2000

INSTITUTIONAL CONTROL	NUMBER	PERCENT
Private – No Religious Affiliation	91	32.7
Private – Religious Affiliation	87	31.2
Public	101	36.2
TOTAL	279	100.0

Region was coded following regional accrediting groupings to observe differences that may be attributable to different regional accrediting associations. Table A3 provides a summary of institutions by accrediting region.

TABLE A3: INSTITUTIONS BY ACCREDITING REGION – CAO 2000

REGION	NUMBER	PERCENT
Middle States	73	26.2
New England	28	10.0
North Central	84	30.1
Northwestern	12	4.3
Southern	63	22.6
Western	19	6.8
TOTAL	279	100.0

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AAC&U Statement of Liberal Learning

A truly liberal education is one that prepares us to live responsible, productive, and creative lives in a dramatically changing world. It is an education that fosters a well-grounded intellectual resilience, a disposition toward lifelong learning, and an acceptance of responsibility for the ethical consequences of our ideas and actions. Liberal education requires that we understand the foundations of knowledge and inquiry about nature, culture and society; that we master core skills of perception, analysis, and expression; that we cultivate a respect for truth; that we recognize the importance of historical and cultural context; and that we explore connections among formal learning, citizenship, and service to our communities.

We experience the benefits of liberal learning by pursuing intellectual work that is honest, challenging, and significant, and by preparing ourselves to use knowledge and power in responsible ways. Liberal learning is not confined to particular fields of study. What matters in liberal education is substantial content, rigorous methodology and an active engagement with the societal, ethical, and practical implications of our learning. The spirit and value of liberal learning are equally relevant to all forms of higher education and to all students.

Because liberal learning aims to free us from the constraints of ignorance, sectarianism, and myopia, it prizes curiosity and seeks to expand the boundaries of human knowledge. By its nature, therefore, liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.

The ability to think, to learn, and to express oneself both rigorously and creatively, the capacity to understand ideas and issues in context, the commitment to live in society, and the yearning for truth are fundamental features of our humanity. In centering education upon these qualities, liberal learning is society's best investment in our shared future.

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About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association devoted to advancing and strengthening liberal learning for all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Since its founding in 1915, AAC&U's membership has grown to more than 700 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local level and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

For more information, visit AAC&U's website (www.aacu-edu.org) or contact us by phone at 202/387-3760.

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